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**Building an Unjust Foodscape: Shifting Governance Regimes, Urban Place Making
and the Making of Chinese Food as Ordinary in Hong Kong**

Food Justice Special Issue

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Building an Unjust Foodscape: Shifting Governance Regimes, Urban Place Making and the Making of Chinese Food as Ordinary in Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper's contribution to research on food and social justice or food justice is threefold. Firstly the paper considers how the processes that shape urban space also contribute to the production of food injustice. This intervention pushes the food justice literature to consider how contextual drivers linked to urban governance are key forces that shape access to food in cities. The second contribution critiques the current emphasis on race-based disadvantage and white privilege by considering how racism as an aspect of food injustice can have shifting influence. Finally, the vast majority of food justice research focuses on the United States, which goes some way toward explaining why race and white privilege play such an important role in current explanations. This paper draws on the context of Hong Kong to highlight how the ways in which place-making projects shift over time and how these spatial projects impact on food injustice. These three research interventions extend the concept and applicability of food justice to make it a more international concept, while at the same time open the concept out to new groups of people who also struggle to feed themselves.

Keywords: Racialization, Governance, Urban Food Systems, Food Justice, Hong Kong

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Food justice is about transforming food systems in order to make them fairer. In 2010 Gottlieb and Joshi recommended a deeper and more sustained examination of what food justice means and how it is contextualised in particular settings in order better understand how food injustice is produced and experienced. This examination, they argue, will enable policy and practice that helps to ameliorate the problems of hunger, diet-related illness, and social exclusion caused by food injustice (see also the introduction to this special issue). Food injustice is defined as an inherent unfairness in the way some aspect(s) of the food system is configured such that some eaters are systematically disadvantaged in their ability to access and/or contribute to the functioning of the food system in which they seek to participate (see also Dixon 2013). Much of the current work that aligns itself with food justice has arisen out of the US research and activism context that considers the ways in which eaters gain access to food that is safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate (Cadieux and Slocum 2015). The primary emphasis of this work considers the role of global industrialised agri-food sector in collaboration with an increasingly globalised consumption sector as the drivers of food insecurity for individuals and/or investigates the efficacy of alternative food-based initiatives that seek to undermine these drivers for marginalised groups (for a review see Cloke 2013). While it is clear that these corporate agents have considerable power in determining the visibility, availability and character of food in places, there are recent calls to go “beyond food” in order to interrogate how local-scale food systems emerge and to consider how the ways that people access food within these systems is linked to a wider range of institutionally configured processes (Passidomo, 2013).

Also explicit in food justice is the mandate to recognise that food systems are racial projects and that research should closely consider the influences of race on the production, distribution, and consumption of food (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). A key tenant in this work is the way that white privilege works through labour and housing markets and in the ways that community resources, such as education and services, are made available within the United States and have systematically produced both poverty and urban spaces of inequality for certain racialized populations (Massey and Denton 1998; see also Alkon 2014, Williams-Forson and Walker 2014). While this work has brought food justice forward as a key aspect of social justice, the ways in which food justice has been framed by the research in term of its limited engagement with urban political economy and its emphasis on specifically US processes of racialisation has meant that its currency as a concept has been unnecessarily limited both conceptually and geographically.

This research extends the existing body of food justice research in a number of important ways. The argument in this paper is concerned with how urban governance can also structure access to food and in doing so also relies on, reinforces or reverses racial projects to achieve its aims. Specifically, the focus concerns the ways that urban policy filters more abstract and ideological positions that underpin state governance, for example, colonialism or neoliberalism, through policy interventions that shape urban landscapes and real world experience on the ground. These urban governance filtering projects, in turn, generate group formation at a particular moment in time in order to suit the purposes of the regime in charge. This research explores these relationships through an investigation of how changing urban governance regimes shape and reshape food access in relation to place making (Saff 1994) by examining how an unjust foodscape of ordinary food provisioning in Hong Kong has been designed through policies relating to

urban land-use, public health, and food security. As such, this research also contributes to existing research in urban political economy by considering how political-economic discourses filter into and help produce food insecurities and injustices in urban spaces and everyday practices of around the procurement of food in cities.

Unjust Foodscapes, Racialization, and Urban Governance

The idea that food is integral in the production of places is not a new concept (e.g., Cook and Crang 1996). Food landscapes, or foodscapes, can be understood as a bricolage of smaller scale places and spaces (Dophijn 2004, Katz 2008), that evolve through time and are a continuously emergent product of the social, political, cultural and material process that shape the ways that eaters, sellers, producers and food come together (see for example McClintock 2001; for place making see Massey 2005, 2010). Foodscapes are intentionally designed and curated to serve both the symbolic representation of a particular location and the material practices of those who have power and in doing so often obscure from view and undermine those who are less powerful (Katz 2008; Zukin 1996). As such the foodscape view reveals or hides those ecologies that enable or disable practices of eating, securing, sourcing, producing, trading and selling food that help to produce and reproduce food systems. In the words of LaDonna Redmond (2013), “we have never had a fair or just food system”, which in turn means that all foodscapes are also unjust foodscapes (Blake, forthcoming). Securing food justice, therefore, is also about reworking the foodscape in order to make visible and offer better opportunities for those who live and seek to practice their foodways within that landscape to achieve the life that they should reasonably expect to live (Sen 1999).

Foodways, the culinary practices and eating habits of a group in a particular place and time, give texture to food systems in that they help to determine which specific foods are produced as well as the ways in which those foods are prepared and eaten (Cannuscio et al., 2010). Foodways are more than mere signifiers of culture and expressions of identity; they are dynamic practices that facilitate the relationships that people have with each other and with the places where they live out their daily lives. As such foodways and their associated food systems are not just “out there”, but are intimately connected to the spaces in which they are practised and located. The ways in which urban space is ordered shape not just the access one has to food but also how one interacts with that food, and even what becomes food and in doing so also shapes one's location within the system itself. Parham (2015:6) tells us, for example, that urban design gives rise to food geographies that “influence our behaviour and expressions of conviviality”. At the same time that food facilitates culture and society, it also has a biological materiality that has the potential to nurture and also harm (through, for example, contamination or via diet-related illnesses). In other words, distinctions between the foodways of groups are not just about internal cultural reproduction; these foodways also become an arena through which power may operate to secure the creation of and/or destroy boundaries between different populations in the service of capitalist reproduction (directly or indirectly) and as such help create conditions of food insecurity and injustice in place.

Race and the racialization are central in research and activism aimed at redressing food injustice (Alkon 2014, Alkon and Aygenman 2011, Cadieux and Slocum 2015). According to Mason (1999:22) racialization is “the notion that seeks to identify the process by which ethnic or other differences are naturalised”. There is also a large but separate literature on the ways in which places within cities become racialised

via the institutions that configure space. In her work on China Towns in western cities, Anderson (1987) argues that ethnic groups are created socially by internal rules of exclusion and inclusion that then become the justification for governmental practices that seek to contain racialized bodies in particular locations. But racialization within cities is more than just containment. Newman (2005) argues that social groups (both dominant and subordinate) are the objects of governance through the institution of boundaries and borders; of categories, rules, and procedures that define and organise populations as racialized, most often to align with creating economic advantage for one group over all others (see also Nally 2011). Consequently racialized (and classed) constructions extend through the city via its systems.

The ways that populations are defined, regulated, controlled, and managed through social institutions has the power to produce access to food. Following from Foucault (1978) biopower is applied in order to create populations through the assertions that the body is also part of the public interest and subject to regulation. Biopower ultimately is a means for controlling the relations between people without exercising direct force, but instead governing through norms that are sometimes regulated by policy and at other times by social compliance (Mori 2008). Distinct populations are made through the ways in which they are made visible in space, given access to space and given the authority to control that space via institutions that serve the interests of capital (Nally 2011). Mori argues (2008:1467) biopower is also “deeply involved in capitalism, particularly because biopolitics regards the human body as a population, regulating it for capital accumulation and redistributing it into proper spaces.” Thus indirect power that is transmitted through governance regimes produces and reproduces populations in everyday spaces. In other words, it is possible that the processes and procedures of racialisation, de-racialisation and re-racialisation of bodies,

food, and places can be tools used to facilitate capital accumulation at different points in time and space.

One aspect of racialization of food most fully developed in the food justice literature concerns the ways that the dominant presence of whiteness can inhibit involvement in food spaces by bodies that are not white, which in turn also shapes how we imagine these spaces (Guthman 2008, Slocum 2007). The fact that the US remains a context within which racialized positions of subordination to whiteness have not altered and because the vast majority of food justice empirical work derives from this context has led to a presumption and a fixing of food injustice as something experienced only by subordinate racialized groups. Therefore, it is thought, removing the chains of racialisation will enable food justice to flourish. However, an examination of food injustice in other geographical contexts where racialisation processes have played out differently may suggest otherwise.

Methodological Approach

The research approach used to develop this case study is drawn from Institutional Ethnography (Smith 2005), which seeks to examine the ways that practices of everyday life are systematically shaped by social institutions and to try to understand how these arrangements shape the ease or difficulty of lived experiences. Institutions, for Smith, are “clusters of text-mediated relations organised around specific ruling functions (ibid, p. 17)”. Functions include areas such as health, knowledge, planning, governance, law, economics, education, and so forth (see also Luhmann 1995). Institutions coordinate or control action by shaping what is widely held to be the right or correct way of doing everyday life within the particular contexts that come under the influence of the

institution at any given point in space and time (DeVault and McCoy 2006:17). How and what is agreed is largely based on relations of power.

The starting point for institutional ethnography is with a search to understand how something happens, and in this instance, the quest was to try to understand how ordinary food provisioning happens in Hong Kong. DeVault and McCoy (2006:19) argue that firstly a “social ‘happening’ consists of the concerted activities of people” and in how “contemporary society, local practices and experiences are tied into extended social relations or chains of action, many of which are mediated by documentary forms of knowledge.” For this research, this implies both the observation of the present and the seeking out of the past through the documentary evidence that exists. It also involves interrogating what people understand to be what happens against reflections of how what happens more generally actually plays out in their own lives.

The question emerged when I moved to Hong Kong in late summer 2010 and found myself trying to navigate a food system that was new to me and balance the desire to “eat like the locals” against the realisation that it was much easier, though more expensive to “eat like a foreigner”. This difficulty was linked in part to language and differences in foodways, but also to ways in which the food systems that operate in Hong Kong are rooted in racialized expectation and historical past. Over the course of the next two and half years, I visited and re-visited every sort of food provisioning setting that I could find. I observed interactions, participated in market exchanges and spoke with those who were buying and selling. I also ate meals with people who had spent their whole lives in Hong Kong and asked them about buying, cooking, and eating food. These conversations happened in a range of settings including a family bar-b-que at the beach, under a plastic tarps that extended the territory of the dai pai dongs (street restaurant), at Michelin starred restaurants, formal banquets and consulate gatherings,

and many other places in between. I kept a diary where I recorded my notes and observations and posted weekly to a public-facing blog where I tried to make sense of and analyse these observations as well as stretch my understanding by interrogating them against selected keywords and visual images. To expand on my own interpretations, I also collected newspaper clippings and the reflections of the relatively active and politically minded community of social media commentators. Through this process, I honed my question to consider how food becomes a tool that puts people in and/or out of place both in figurative but also literal terms.

Soon after I started living in Hong Kong, there were ongoing debates about the future of the publically provided market spaces that were owned and operated by the Hong Kong Government. At that time (2011-12) I taught a course at Hong Kong University on Culture, Social Justice and Urban Space. These 53 students (most having grown up in Hong Kong) were asked to visit two wet markets within the city, record their observations and to interview either a market trader or someone buying food about their use and experience of the market. They were also asked to reflect their own and their interviewees' personal experiences and understanding against the key concepts of the module. I return to this period of Hong Kong's food history toward the end of the paper, and in addition to my observations, this student work informs this part the discussion.

The process of doing Institutional Ethnography involves building up a picture over time and pursuing leads and further questions as they emerge (DeVault and McCoy 2006). It became clear that to understand how food provisioning was happening in the period when I was living there; I needed to investigate how the food system had been managed and organised historically. This part of the investigation, therefore, involved reading research reports and visiting archives of longstanding companies operating

within the territory. I also interrogated the archives of the Hong Kong Legislative Council (LegCo), the governing body of Hong Kong, which includes committee meeting minutes, government correspondence and other regulatory documentation to build up a picture of how different governance regimes created and recreated the institutions that shape food provisioning and access to food for those who live in Hong Kong. While the discussion that follows is necessarily partial in terms of the inclusion of details and the range of examples I collected, the data and discussion illustrate how governance regimes, urban place making and racialized transitions (re-)produce unjust foodscapes.

Building Hong Kong's Unjust Foodscape

The context of Hong Kong tells us how urban foodscapes are shaped and reshaped to reflect the socio-economic values of those in power. In Hong Kong, this has meant the production of the food system as one that was initially configured to reproduce distinctions rooted in racialized difference and then was subsequently redesigned to reflect a system aiming to serve a neoliberal drive toward profit seeking through dispossession (Harvey 2005). The ongoing neoliberalisation of Hong Kong began at about the period when negotiations for the handover back to China began and extended into the present post-handover period. For Hong Kong, like most world cities, neoliberalism has emerged and played out in ways that produce a social system characterised by income-based disadvantages that sustain food injustice.

What makes Hong Kong particularly interesting as a case, however, is its uneasy relationship with colonialism and the racial formations that derive from this relationship. These relationships and formations offer new insights into how racialization and the design of urban food systems interlink to inform social inequalities

that present as unjust foodscapes. The colonisation of the territory was one that was partial and contradictory in relation to the Chinese who came to inhabit the city. The British aimed to construct the colony as first and foremost as a space that would connect east and west and as such must remain open to the flows of Chinese who wished to enter (Bashford 2014). British interests also relied heavily on being able to mobilise pre-existing Chinese trading networks (Ngo 2002). As the governance of China shifted its relationship with Hong Kong also shifted such that Hong Kong became a key destination for Chinese refugees escaping from China for political and economic reasons. When the handover came, it was for many a handing back to those from whom escape was initially desired, which is not to say that they wished to remain ruled by the British (Ngo, 2002). At the same time, it served China's and Britain's interests to maintain a separate but not independent Hong Kong through special administrative region (SAR) status conferred as part of the handover in 1997 (Scott 1989). It is within this context of shifting governance regimes that the foodscape for Chinese eaters has been configured and reconfigured from a racializing landscape to one that is ordinary.

The remainder of this empirical section is organised into two parts. The first part focuses on Colonial Hong Kong from 1860 to the handover to China in 1997 and considers the ways that the British initially constructed a landscape of racialized separation that utilised a discourse of food-related public health to establish dominance within the colony. After World War 2, changes in global geopolitics, changes in the ways Hong Kong became positioned in relationship to China, changes within China and changes in the ambitions the British had for Hong Kong meant that racialized spatial separation between European and Chinese could no longer be maintained or was necessarily desirable in a globalising world (McGee 1973). This presented new problems concerning food security that were overlaid upon old concerns linking food

and public health to gradually reposition what was understood as “ordinary” food, who were the main eaters of that ordinary food, and how those foodways fit into the territory’s landscape. In this post-war period, the British began a process that gradually withdrew from an imperialist colonial position based on racialized difference to promote a neoliberal ideology that engaged market-based citizenship, which signalled a rise in class-based distinctions within the Chinese Hong Kong population. The second part of this empirical section focuses on the period after the handover from 1997 until 2013, which has seen a deepening of neoliberalism in the territory, but at the same time the completion of the process through which Chineseness has become the dominant racial category both in terms of numbers but also in terms of power over governance, land and capital.

Their Food and Our Food: Colonial Hong Kong, 1860-1997

Under colonialism two separate and distinct food systems emerged in Hong Kong. The food accessible to the Chinese residents was based on historical food tastes and practices, sourcing geographies and distribution networks that had its roots in the traditional foodways of Canton of which Hong Kong had been a part (Lee and Lee 1976, Liu 2011). This ordinary Chinese diet consisted of rice or rice-based food, tofu or other soy based protein, vegetables and either fish, pork, or poultry. Steaming was an important and preferred cooking method in Cantonese cuisine and relies on freshness (Lee and Lee 1976, Liu 2011). To ensure freshness cooks carefully inspected the vegetables and where possible sourced fish or chickens that are still living or animals that were very recently slaughtered. For large fish market traders would cut around the heart and lungs of the fish; slicing off chunks for the patron even while those organs still pumped oxygen and blood through the flesh. Food that is not fresh enough to be

steamed was fried or rejected. The freshness of meat, fish and vegetables also ensured the healthful essence of foods that is important for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC) according to a practitioner of TMC with whom I spoke (see also Liu 2011). The proportions of rice or noodles in relation to other foods in a meal would vary based on the income of the person or family, but this is broadly the cuisine (see also Lee and Lee 1976, Liu 2011). In early colonial times, this food was purchased on the street from Chinese hawkers or market vendors. Ng (2009) in her memoirs of growing up in Hong Kong in the 1960 and 1970 and return visits from Canada to Hong Kong in the 2000's argues that ordinary foodways amongst the Chinese in Hong Kong have not changed much in terms of tastes, cooking styles and preferences and this was confirmed by elder Chinese interviewees with whom I spoke. While the British did not like the hawking and market activities of the Chinese who lived in the city, these activities were understood as a necessary part of Asian life and therefore to be tolerated provided it did not encroach on those parts of the city occupied by Europeans (McGee 1973).

Those western merchants who dominated business interests in the colony established a white food system that would sit in opposition to Chinese food. This is identified in the historical documents of Dairy Farm (now the Wellcome chain of food stores) as "ordinary food" (Dairy Farm 2016). The white food system was based primarily on importing food and developing infrastructures to support the storage, processing and retail of food with an eye toward comfort, cleanliness and familiarity to British expatriate population. By 1881, ice-making machinery was running in the colony so that frozen foods could be imported, such as poultry, beef and pork, despite the fact fresh versions of such foods could be sourced locally. The use of freezing technology was important for helping to maintain cleanliness and standards of taste as freshly slaughtered food favoured by the Chinese was deemed unpalatable to the

Europeans as exemplified by this quote from Cooke in *The Times*: In Hong Kong and Shanghai, a dinner table in the summer season is a melancholy spectacle of spoiled food. The creatures to be eaten were necessarily killed the same day, and the tough tissues are as hard as death stiffened them (quoted in Waters 1990: 236). Alongside this, a consortium of Europeans in 1886 established Dairy Farm to offer a “clean and uncontaminated milk supply for the colony (Dairy Farm 2016)”, which even included dairy maids imported from England to complete the milking (Waters 1996). Dairy Farm also started “the first recognised deli and grocery in Hong Kong” (Dairy Farm 2016). Not only did this food system accommodate western tastes and diets, a key selling point was that this food, provided a food system that was superior to that which could be secured via Chinese controlled sources because it was understood to be cleaner through its association with whiteness.

Those eating white food purchased it from shops that were part of a developing global supply chain run and operated by people who were white and sold within purpose-built spaces. Quality was based on cold deadness, familiarity, and western location of origin. Chinese food, on the other hand, was living and breathing, unfamiliar and either farmed locally or imported from China. The ways this provisioning was racialized, and initially tolerated, but segregated was also strategically linked to the maintenance of trade with China and as a mechanism for maintaining control of the colony as it facilitated compliance of the Chinese within and beyond Hong Kong’s border (see also McGee 1973).

For the British, the Chinese became what they ate, and this was dirty and diseased (Waters 1990, McGee 1973). Bashford (2004) argues that public health was a technology through which colonial territories and the populations they contained could be rendered intelligible to colonisers. An important aspect of this technology in

colonial governance was to “map racial segregation onto health segregation (Bashford 2004:11)” in ways that produced two populations, one which was pure and clean—the colonisers—from one that is infected and dirty—those who are colonised. Within this configuration, frontier spaces such as Hong Kong were not spaces for settlement and incorporation into the national body but were instead dangerous spaces of contamination where contact was to be minimised and controlled. While populations were small, separation could be maintained via spatial distance (e.g., Chinese settlement on one side of Victoria Harbor and European settlement on Hong Kong Island, Ngo 1999, McGee 1973) or separation ordinance (see Legislative Council of Hong Kong, 1888, 1904). Separation ordinances banned Chinese residents from living (unless they were acting as live-in servants for European/non-Chinese families) or street-trading in certain areas. These ordinances were predicated on the fear and loathing that the Europeans had of the Chinese, a fear and loathing that were directly linked to widely held perceptions that “the Chinese were not yet aware of the virtues of environmental sanitation and to live with the Chinese was to invite hazards to health (Zhang 2006). Importantly, the legacy of the production of these spaces of separation is that certain locations that were white remain areas regarded as highly desirable.

The proximity to China and events occurring there resulted in several large-scale migrations of mainland Chinese to the British Colony, most significantly the Communist Revolution (1949) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961). By 1950 the population had grown to nearly 2.5 million people, and despite efforts to control border crossings by the Chinese into the colony, by 1961 the population had exceeded 3 million (Vaughn and Dwyer 1966). This rapid growth in people was not met by a provision of social infrastructure by the colonial government. Housing was ad hoc and dangerous as structures were either temporary buildings in squatter camps or subdivided

tenement structures. For a large number of these residents, street trading and hawking were an economic activity that was easily accessible (McGee 1973, Smart 1989).

As Hong Kong's population grew and the separation between European and Chinese settlement areas decreased, street hawking became increasingly regulated. According to McGee (1973) legislative attempts often sought to address several complaints. Firstly, street hawkers were viewed as unsanitary and messy. Food produces waste as it decays and rots but also as it is portioned from its raw form as a plant or animal into edible food at the point of sale. This mess attracts pests and the diseases that they carry. Hawkers were blamed for this mess, despite the fact that mess and disease were exacerbated by the colonial government's unwillingness to build infrastructures (market spaces, housing) that would accommodate Chinese dwelling and sustained settlement within the colony. Secondly, the hawkers were framed as holding an "unfair advantage" in the marketplace because hawkers do not pay rents and the related costs associated with a permanent space. Thirdly, the crowds that they attract block the roadways and pavements to through traffic, a necessary condition for maintaining trade for "legitimate" rent paying shop owners (McGee 1973). Hawker licences linked to specific geographical spaces were introduced as a mechanism to impose order and to sanitise the city while also freeing up streets for the operations of permanently located and more capital intensive businesses that would transfer rents to the elite. They also brought hawkers into the biopolitical realm as they could be counted and monitored. Between 1950 and the early 1970's hawker licences were readily available, inexpensive and could be passed on to children though not sold (McGee 1973).

In addition to the way that food spaces have been incorporated into the fabric of the city, the way individual foods have been regulated and incorporated is also

important to the trajectory of Hong Kong's food landscape. During and after World War 2 there were shortages of rice in Hong Kong leading to legislation in 1955 giving rice reserve commodity status (Wong 2005). The legislation imposed quotas for rice to be held in the case of shortage with an initial reserve set at about 45,000 tonnes. The regulation also involved limiting how rice could enter, exit and be sold within Hong Kong. Individuals could bring rice into Hong Kong for personal use, but only licensed companies could move large amounts of rice in or through the SAR. Those able to apply for a license could only import or export rice, but not both. Moreover, to hold a license one had to be a resident of Hong Kong and have large capital and financial reserves. The ordinance also limited rice selling to the numerous small, Chinese-owned shops that were located throughout the territory. These shops were responsible for storing the government mandated reserves, thereby producing a landscape of responsibility and risk that resided within the lower-income Chinese community, but which left opportunities for wealth that extended beyond these communities. Importantly, this strategy of starvation prevention, which Nally (2011) argues was abandoned in other colonies in the shift toward agrarian capitalism, was subject to the rhetoric of an untrustworthy and backward local peoples for its introduction as much as it was an attempt to produce Hong Kong as a fortress in a hostile Asia (see Wong 2005 for a further description of the reasons for the rice reserve legislation).

By the 1970's the British orientation toward Hong Kong changed as it sought to proactively reposition Hong Kong in the new global economy and with that to establish a foothold in the territory after the eventual handover back to China (Ren 2010). In addition to the capital of the colonial firms, there was an abundance of capital brought to Hong Kong by wealthy Shanghai Chinese who fled the transition to Communism

(Abbas 2000). The alliance between Eastern and Western capital had a vision for the city that was to produce it as the Eastern centre for global financial circulation as a replacement for Shanghai. To facilitate this collaboration, neoliberalism as a political-economic ideology was introduced in the territory in order to coordinate the desired market dominance and capital accumulation (Ren 2010). This capital alliance and the desire to retain a position within the region by the British and increasingly other white western populations changed the positionality of these groups in relation to each other, but only for those Chinese who were able to establish their citizenship within the marketplace. An example of such intermingling is provided by Li Ka Shing's investment and ultimately holding a majority stake in Hutchinsons, and early white food provider in the colony and which controlled the ParknShop chain of food stores, one of Hong Kong's largest retail food providers (Blake 2013, see also Waters 1990). The shared global financial city project also involved the production of a skyline that could sell Hong Kong to the world as modern, efficient, and financially successful (Cartier 1999). This landscape construction has implications for the ways in which those whose foodways do and do not align with this image were incorporated into the landscape.

In the early 80's, when the Thatcher government committed to handing the whole of Hong Kong back to the Chinese when the lease for the New Territories ended in 1997, there was a myriad of opportunities for those in the city who had the right connections and enough resources to expand their wealth. When it was decided to relocate the poor from Kowloon walled city and from various shanty towns to Tin Shui Wai, the British adopted a policy whereby private developers would be responsible for helping the government meet its social housing needs. Li Ka Shing, through a property development company, Mightycity, struck a deal with the British governors whereby retail services were to be limited to those developed by Mr Li (Leung, 2010). Given Mr

Li held a significant stake in what was to become one of Hong Kong's major supermarket chains this also meant no competition from either the other major supermarket chain, Wellcome, or from a public wet market. Although the conditions in the walled city and shanty towns were far from good, the more central location in Kowloon City was residence previously lived afforded opportunities for work and access to public markets. Even today the residents of Tin Shui Wai, some of the poorest in Hong Kong, continue to struggle to find affordable food and pay up to 50% more for meat and other foodstuffs than those in other parts of the territory (Ng 2013).

It was also around this time that the supermarkets began to expand their influence by selling food beyond their white, expatriate customer base (Ho 2005), an expansion plan intimately linked to real estate development within the city (Wang 2003). In more established areas the supermarkets did not directly compete with wet market provisioning but instead competed with small scale dry goods and groceries to the extent that by the time of the handover, these were largely absent from the Hong Kong landscape (Ho 2005).

At the same time as development was concentrating in the hands of the wealthy, street hawking was further constrained and disciplined as part of this repositioning of the city in the global arena. This reshaping of the landscape involved pronounced efforts to shift hawkers to indoor markets, or wet markets, and as such erase them from public view (see Blake 2015). A November 2003 response from the Competition Policy Advisory Group Secretariat to a report by the Consumer Council rehearses the initial argument, "The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau notes that the development of FEHD (Food and Environmental Hygiene Department) run wet markets is inextricably linked to the history of relocating hawkers. The wet markets were built to free streets and public areas from hawking activities, thus eliminating a serious source of problems

related to environmental hygiene, food safety and pedestrian obstruction.” Planning regulations were drafted that would require new housing structures to include some wet market provision of 1 stall for every 55-65 households. The city also undertook a programme of building public marketplaces and encouraging street hawkers to take up stalls, although the numbers of stalls made available were insufficient to accommodate all those involved in street trading (McGee 1973). The third plank of this sanitisation and containment programme was to put a full stop to granting hawker licences to new applicants.

The result of this shift in policy was that some street traders moved into the wet markets, while others retained their licenced hawker stalls in the market spaces where people had become used to buying their goods. A third group of traders emerged; those who are illegal hawkers because they are unlicensed (see Smart 1989 for a discussion around hawker insecurity). By the 1980’s there were 20,000 licenced street hawkers remaining in the city, and about 200 FEHD run wet markets, with a further number of markets located in housing estates but privately run by developers. Several thousand remained (and still remain) as illegal traders who must incorporate fines and risk of arrest into their business model (Smart 1989).

Chinese food is food: Chinese Neoliberalism, 1997-2013.

As a special administrative region (SAR) of China, Hong Kong maintains adherence the neoliberal capitalism introduced to the region by the British when it was a colony. Indeed, some argue that the handover government has not just maintained neoliberalism, but has instead deepened its adherence to it (Chung and Ngai 2007). Individual responsibility is instituted into the taxation and social welfare system whereby the tax rates on income and profits are very low (about 15%), and there are no

tariffs on imports. As a result, expenditure on public services is also similarly low. According to research by Lee, Wong and Law (2007), low-wage occupations make up two-thirds of the labour force and are jobs where people feel both trapped and insecure. Income disparity and uncertainty translates into food insecurity for approximately twenty percent of Hong Kong's population; Feeding Hong Kong estimates that 1.5 million people in Hong Kong were food insecureⁱⁱ in 2013 as they had incomes that limit daily expenditure for food to just HK\$20 (about £1.50 or US\$2.70). On top of this there has been trade liberalisation around key foodstuffs, reregulation to planning rules that encourage the concentration of power over food provision into the hands of the few, and financialisation that converts food spaces into a tradable commodity (see Castree 2010 for a further discussion of the dimensions of neoliberalism, and Fisher and Katz 2011 for the links between supermarketisation and trade liberalisation). These changes have significantly altered how food is made available within the landscape, but also how food spaces enable social interactions and community.

Although the British Colonials introduced the formal wet markets into the landscape, they also adopted a policy of neglect toward these spaces. As such, there was not a programme of renewal to keep the markets modern (e.g., air conditioning was not introduced into the spaces, lighting systems reflect the technology of the 1970's). Indeed a walk through the markets reveals buildings that have not been painted nor maintained beyond a very basic level. Because these market spaces are dim, dirty, and can be very hot, both retailers and consumers abandoned some of the markets in favour of the more lively street market spaces nearby. For example, the FEHD market in Sheung Wan is a dirty and unappealing site with few customers and few sellers. Just a few blocks away is the Graham Street Market, which is not only one of the oldest street markets in the city, but also a lively and vibrant space where many people in the city go

to buy foodⁱⁱⁱ. Calls for renewing the markets were met with the response that it is not the role of the government to become directly involved in enhancing the competitiveness of such businesses and renewal would go against the government's perceived remit which is to "allow the free play of market forces and keeping intervention to the minimum" (Competition Advisory Group, 2003). The new post-handover government put forward a plan for selective closure of those markets with 40% or higher vacancy coupled with a programme of privatisation of those markets with the greatest development potential. By 2013 there remain just 77 FEHD owned and operated wet markets within the SAR (FEHD 2013).

In 2006, the management of 26 of the FEHD markets was transferred to The Link (REIT). The Link is a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) and as so operates within global financial markets. The Link REIT (The Link) has responsibility for management shopping centres located within housing developments. The Link is also responsible for a further 96 markets located in public housing estates, making it one of the most significant overseers of food provisioning in Hong Kong as the properties are located "on the doorstep of over 40% of Hong Kong's Households (The Link 2013)." The wet market in Tai Po Market in the New Territories has met with some local approval by shoppers, but on the whole transfer to The Link has met with disapproval from users as the spaces for shopping have been made less hospitable and the costs of food in these markets has increased as have rents for stall holders (Chung and Ngai, 2007). Several students visited The Link managed wet markets and spoke to the traders. One student who had grown up in Hong Kong reported:

"To compete with the shopping malls, The Link has renovated, but also raised *rents and introduced new competition nearby in malls...the strategy of The Link* seems to be to displace the lower class shops with middle-class shops, even

though people still want the markets. The traders cannot raise their prices, and they cannot make a living in the longer term. Poor people will be forced to go to the supermarkets.” (Student A, 2012)

What is particularly interesting about this quote is the way in which the student highlights class divisions and constructs users of the markets as ordinary people, in striking contrast to the ways in which the British colonial government did when initially establishing these market spaces.

By 2013 the plan to transfer all of the FEHD wet markets to The Link had been all but abandoned as a result of local protests although there are also no plans to return control of the privatised wet markets back to the FEHD. But, for Chung and Ngai (2007) the transfer of ownership of a significant proportion of the most viable wet markets to The Link is the quintessential example of a deepening Neoliberalism in the region as the markets are narrated as a welfare strategy to prop up lower income residents and privatisation into global capital represents the entrepreneurial state.

Those using the wet markets view these spaces as more than mere places in which to buy and sell food. Student reflection and research revealed important social contributions whereby the food brought people into the markets, but the food spaces as they were configured enabled social interactions, commensurability and community. Student B (2012) reported that (the wet market) is a place for people to socialise with each other. For example, the seller in Lockhard Road Market said that she chats with other sellers every day and when I visited Aberdeen Market the market vendor recommended vegetables to me. Likewise, Student C (2012) said, I remember there was a large area at the entrance of the Cheung Fat wet market in Tsing Yi. People gathered there after buying food. Now no people can gather there as the area has been turned into a shop under The Link management. However, as contrasted by this

student, the aspects and advantages of social interaction hold no value in the business of real estate investment: Not only are the markets a place where food is bought and sold, they are a place where traditions and culture are propagated and where friends and family gather. The management seems to prioritise profit over cultural value. (Student D, 2012). These student reflections illustrate the argument that the presence of public space produces a sense of shared citizenship that can cut across lines of difference (see also Amin 2003), but when such spaces are conceived of as spaces for rent extraction food and livelihood insecurity as well as social isolation is the result and a convivial foodscape is lost.

Alongside privatisation and disinvestment in the public markets and the individualisation that the spatial reconfigurations brought, is the push toward supermarketisation. On the whole, supermarket provisioning remained a relatively small threat to wet markets until the late 1990's and early 2000's (Goldman et al. 1999, Ho 2005). Two key events have made supermarkets a commercially attractive and socially palatable alternative to the markets. Firstly, SARS and Bird Flu or Avian Influenza has been linked closely to the selling of live chickens in the markets. While scholars have demonstrated that SARS was used to deepen racial divisions between Chinese and non-Chinese in Toronto (Ali and Keil 2008), zoonotic disease has also been used as a biopolitical tool for deepening social divisions in Hong Kong. Many links could be made, but I will just highlight two. While there is evidence that live birds became infected on farms in China, before their arrival in Hong Kong's wet markets, the commercially important food import system and did not come under attack (Joffe and Lee 2004, Webster et al. 2005). Instead of commercial interests, it was the wet markets and eaters who use them that were narrated as the site of responsibility. In response to this, supermarkets are promoted locally and by world health experts as a preferable

mode of food retail as they are perceived to be cleaner and also do not offer animal-human contact (Fielding et al. 2005, Chen et al. 2013, see also Ali and Keil 2008 for a wider discussion of SARS in relation to global cities). In this narrative commercial interests are the saviours of public health. At the same time, other public health disbenefits, such as higher fat and sodium intake and associated diet-related illnesses that are associated with food globalisation and Supermarketisation are ignored (Hawkes 2006).

Perhaps as important to enabling the conditions for the rise of the supermarkets has been the liberalisation of rice. In 1997, the amount of rice that was statutorily required to be kept in reserve was reduced and by 2003 rice was fully liberalised. This liberalisation has enabled supermarkets to use their own supply linkages to stock rice thereby enabling more one-stop shopping for Chinese consumers. The once important small rice sellers that operated alongside the wet markets have all but disappeared from the food landscape, and it is clear that younger consumers now view supermarket shopping as a more convenient and cleaner form of food provisioning compared to the old way. For example, Student E (2012) wrote, I used to think the wet market was some dying business sector in Hong Kong. I thought the wet markets had been replaced by the supermarket and I thought the only reason for the markets to still exist was to serve the old people. (since visiting) My view has changed, the wet markets are important to public life. Student F (2011) commented that *“The food is also so much fresher than what you get in the supermarket. I was surprised.”* While the same kinds foods are still eaten by Chinese families, notions of food quality that centre on freshness is being replaced by notions that prioritise hygiene bringing these foodways into alignment with western tastes and capital’s priorities.

Legislation requiring market stalls in new housing developments instituted in the 1970's was changed in 2005 such that the number of stalls to be allocated would be determined on a case-by-case basis, with the presence of supermarket provisioning acting as an acceptable proxy (Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene, 2009). Recent development in Kowloon Bay, for example, contains no wet market provisioning as both Wellcome and ParknShop have stores within the area. Tommy Cheung of the Liberal Party describes the attitude toward the development of market-based food provisioning: I have had high *officials debating me about why we shouldn't* just do away with the wet markets and shop at supermarkets instead (quoted in Dewolf, 2012). This attitude not only reflects neoliberal values aiming to concentrate wealth and power over food systems into the hands of the wealthy, but it also undermines livelihood strategies and the foodways of the poor.

Conclusion

This paper argues that in Hong Kong changing governance regimes as a result of de/re-colonialization have altered social hierarchies that were founded on the racialization of the Chinese and their everyday practices during the early colonial period. While the post-colonial system de-racialized the Chinese in the sense that what these bodies do as part of everyday life became ordinary and dominant; the political-economic system put into place by the British, which was subsequently embraced by the Chinese elite, left intact a context that reproduces food insecurity for the poor. Thus while those affected have become part of the dominant racialized population, through poverty as individuals they remain on the margins. This individualised positionality of poverty is a result of the historical trajectory of the development of Hong Kong. In the early colonial period, the Chinese in Hong Kong were largely denied access to power

and were kept in line through the British tolerance of their foodways, although tolerance did not extend to colonial infrastructure investments. As the population of Hong Kong increased and as it became in the British interest to incorporate the Chinese into the territory as a workforce, some infrastructure was built, which included housing and market spaces for the buying and selling of food. These infrastructures, however, were designed as a means to cleanse the streets and support capital accumulation rather than promote social justice. Finally, the poor in the city are not able to exercise the rights of citizenship as this is granted through consumption and the right to food is conferred ideally through the supermarket. Important to this story of food injustice are the ways in which the practices and policies of local government, namely planning, public health, and food security policies, have been used to facilitate racialized and then income-based social divisions as they intersect with the food insecurity of the Chinese inhabitants of Hong Kong. These practices and policies have produced the physical absences and presences and material dispersions and concentrations that make up the fabric of Hong Kong's foodscape.

The implications of the research for studying food justice, however, extends beyond Hong Kong. The research demonstrates how social institutions define what counts as food and the processes by which individual things can become food, for example by specifying the conditions under which specific animals, such as fish or chicken, may be slaughtered or sold. Importantly also, through planning regulations and public health interventions, the spaces through which food must travel to become someone's meal define how accesses to food is determined. Urban design, public health and hygiene, as a result, are key discourses that facilitate the operation of power within urban food systems. This power is applied via the regulation of not only what goes into

bodies but also how food is made available for consumption and how, where and in what way it is secured.

It is clear from the case study that those adopting neoliberalism pursue wealth creation above all else and do so systematically through processes that are enacted in space in ways that are also historically path dependent (See also Brenner and Theodore 2002). With the handover, the distinctions between white food and Chinese food disappeared as a construct, while associates of clean and dirty were retained and assigned class-based distinctions. Food was also reconfigured into profitable and unprofitable depending upon how it was enfolded into the capitalist landscape. As a result, certain protections that had arisen to support Chinese food were withdrawn (e.g. rice quotas and wet markets). Part of Hong Kong's success as a neoliberal space has been the ability of successive government to shed such social obligations in favour of commercial interests in the service of neoliberal capitalism, and as this case study shows, food was not spared from this reconfiguration of the political economy of the city.

To borrow from Aalbers and Christophers' (2014:388-9) comment regarding housing, I am not naïve enough to imagine that 'fixing' the food question will fix capitalism's problems more generally...I would insist, equally, that there can be no meaningful and progressive socio-economic change without the food question being directly addressed. This situation leaves a number of questions concerning how we enact a food justice. For example, what are the opportunities for transformation toward more equitable urban regimes? How might we de-commodify the food system to enable people to live the life that they should reasonably expect to live? There are certainly initiatives occurring across the globe, and including in Hong Kong, which aim to de-commodify the food system or at least aspects of it. Perhaps there are ways to reorient

urban land use, food security and public health policy to enable greater and more equitable access to food by reconfiguring them act to support care and belonging as opposed to racism and the production of economic advantage and disadvantage. Finally, these questions are important to consider, because as Hong Kong shows, merely removing the chains of racism does not ensure access to food.

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i Although not pursued analytically in this paper, it is important to note that not all foodways that were devalued as a result of racialized hierarchies that emerged under British governance were reconfigured after the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. For example, despite long histories of engagement with Hong Kong, the food cultures of the Nepali and Filipina populations remain commercially under-represented within the Hong Kong food landscape, despite the fact that this is city that prides itself on being a cosmopolitan “Food City” (Farrer 2010, see also Knowles and Harper 2009 for further discussion of Nepali and Filipina populations in Hong Kong). In other words, a race-based disadvantage has not completely disappeared from Hong Kong as a result of the handover, and indeed new forms of difference and friction have and continue to emerge between those who see themselves as Hong Kongers and those Mainland Chinese (see Ma 2011). Finally, while this discussion of food insecurity as it relates to the majority Chinese population in Hong Kong attends to the ways that racialisation was initially imposed on the Chinese by the English colonial power, it is not to imply that the Chinese in Hong Kong were also not busy at the same time reproducing racialized distinctions of their own, albeit, through the often less formal, but still very powerful mechanisms of difference production associated with everyday life (see for example the account presented by Ng, 2009).

ii Feeding Hong Kong is a food rescue third sector organization that helps redistribute food surplus to charities within the SAR who then redistribute to those in needing emergency food aid. In addition to supporting food banks, Feeding Hong Kong is working to raise public awareness around issues of food insecurity and food waste within the SAR. Further information about feeding Hong Kong can be found on their website (<http://feedinghk.org/>).

iii In 2015, much of Graham street market was closed to make way for a new high rise development which incorporates a much scaled back provision of food market space.